

## CORRESPONDENCE.

[Correspondents are requested to write briefly and to the point. No attention will be paid to anonymous communications.]

The Generic Name *Troglodytes*.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

*Sirs:* Is there not a universally accepted rule among scientists, that the same generic name cannot occur twice in the nomenclature of the animal kingdom? How is it, then, that in the family Simiadae (Mammalia) there is a genus *Troglodytes*, and that in the family Troglodytidae (Aves) the the same generic name occurs? I am merely asking for information concerning what appears to me to be a standing violation of a very necessary rule.

Yours sincerely,

Ottawa, July 7, 1884.

W. L. SCOTT.

[The name *Troglodytes* has priority in ornithology, having been proposed by Vieillot in 1807. E. Geoffroy, in 1812, adopted the same name for a genus of anthropoid apes, and its continued use in mammalogy is in violation of the very important and almost universally accepted rule that the same generic name cannot be employed twice in the same kingdom. The apes referred by Geoffroy to *Troglodytes* were long since provided with other generic names, which are employed for them by careful authors, to the exclusion of *Troglodytes* in that connection.—J. A. A.]

## Strickland as an Advocate of 'Linnæus at '58.'

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

*Sirs:* In a copy of Moehring's 'Avium Genera,' 1752, examined in the Stricklandian library in the museum of Cambridge, England, I find written on the fly-leaf the following, in the handwriting of Mr. Strickland:—

"Moehring's Genera are *not* to be adopted, being six years prior to 1758, the date of Linn. Syst. Nat. ed. 10, in which the *binomial system* was first introduced. H. E. Strickland."

This would seem to show that the person whose name is most closely connected with the Code of Nomenclature which takes Linnæus at '66 was himself a '58-er.

Mus. Cantab., 15 June, 1884.

ELLIOTT COUES.

## Indian Bird Names.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

*Sirs:* The July issue of 'The Auk' contains an article by Mr. W. W. Cooke, entitled 'Bird Nomenclature of the Chippewa Indians.' The article is an interesting one to ornithologists, but it possesses an equal if not a greater value to ethnologists. It is chiefly for the latter reason that I

wish to call attention to it more particularly, because it is mainly to ornithologists that the student of ethnology must look for linguistic material of this sort. Every vocabulary designed for Indian word-collecting contains long lists of names of animals, birds, and plants, for which the Indian equivalents are wanted. But while every Indian knows the names of more or less of the animals and birds about him, very few word collectors have an equal knowledge, and having obtained an Indian name for some bird pointed out or described, they often are quite at a loss to identify the bird and to render the Indian name into English; even when so rendered the inaccuracies of such lists greatly detract from their value. Hence very little material of the kind contributed by Mr. Cooke is accessible to linguistic students. As the field-work of ornithologists not infrequently brings them into contact with Indian tribes, they can, with the expenditure of comparatively little time and trouble, do a real service to ethnology, and at the same time furnish matter by no means unimportant to ornithology. Having in hand, as the ornithological collector frequently does, the skins of the birds for which names are desired, the names can be obtained and verified with absolute accuracy. Some of the myths, of which Mr. Cooke gives an example, are exceedingly interesting, and when related at length with the particularity characteristic of Indian folk-lore, afford very valuable hints of Indian customs and Indian philosophy. In connection with such myths it is of course desirable to know the names of the animals to which they relate, and I have frequently been called upon to identify the birds and animals figuring in such myths, collected with great care and labor, when all that could be given by the ethnological collector in the way of description were a few phrases almost or quite meaningless. Bird myths naturally mean more to the ornithologist than to any one else, and they can be collected by him with an accuracy attainable by no one else.

Mr. Cooke remarks that "These Indians [Chippewas] claim to have a name for each and every kind of bird inhabiting this country; as a fact they have no specific name for fully one-half of those which yearly nest before their eyes, or pass by in migration." That Indians should know little of the birds, especially of the smaller kinds, that visit this country only as migrants, is not perhaps surprising, but that any considerable number of birds inhabiting their country, even of the smaller and inconspicuous kinds, should not be known to Indians and be named by them is surprising. If it can be substantiated in the case of the Chippewa tribe, I should be inclined to attribute their present ignorance to a departure from true aboriginal knowledge and habits. As among whites, knowledge is unequally distributed, so is it among Indians. Some are much more learned than others in the nature and ways of animals; but among any considerable number of Indians some one can almost invariably be found equal to the task of naming any animal or bird living in his country. Such knowledge is much more universal among Indians than it is among the whites. Almost every bird or animal is distinguished from associated species by the possession of some peculiar work or distinctive

quality, and not only are these noted by the Indians, but their mythology furnishes them with the exact when and wherefore the particular mark, color, or quality was received. From the white head of the Bald Eagle to the ruby on the head of the Ruby-crowned Wren, or on the throat of the Hummingbird, every characteristic marking is accounted for. It is in the recital of these and kindred tales that the long winter evenings are whiled away, and though one may receive different versions of the same story as told by different persons, they substantially agree.

The etymologies of these animal names are also of peculiar interest, since they well illustrate the primitive methods of word-making.

Indian classification of animals and natural objects is very little understood; and if any ornithologist can work out, for instance, the classes into which the birds known to a certain tribe are thrown, and ascertain the basis for such Indian classification, he will have made an important contribution to our knowledge of the workings of the primitive mind.

Other points of interest in this connection might be mentioned: but enough perhaps has been said to direct the attention of ornithologists to the interest and importance of this kind of work.

Very truly yours,

Washington, D. C.,

H. W. HENSHAW.

August 24, 1884.

#### A New Element in Diagnosis.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

Sirs: I think it would be advisable for naturalists to give careful attention to the weight of the objects which they study. The descriptive ornithologist delineates the bird in regard to size, the length of body, expanse, wing, tail, tarsus, bill, foot, etc.; respecting the color, he is careful to describe minutely different shades, tints, and stripes, but generally nothing is said of the *weight*.

Of the eggs, the measurements of length and breadth are given, to hundredths of an inch; the color, whether immaculate or spotted, lined or splashed, wreathed or scrawled, the markings regularly or irregularly distributed; the ground-color and markings described to delicate tints and shades—though usually, but not always, the maculates are uniform in substance-color, the differences being due to the deposition of coloring matter at successive stages of shell-formation—but *nothing in regard to the weight of the eggs*.

In birds of the size of the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), it might not be advisable to express the weight in terms lower than drams, perhaps; in the smaller species the weight should be given in grains, and the larger in ounces and pounds, or their equivalents in the metric system. The weight of the eggs should be expressed in grains, drams and ounces, according to their respective bulk.

This matter would require some skill and expense, and not every